

BEST AVAILABLE COPY

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (currently amended) An apparatus for coupling comprising:

a generally planar member having a pair of generally opposed surfaces and a an oblong slot therebetween disposed at an engaging region;

a coupling member having an external thread set and having a an elongated complementary portion for engaging the oblong slot of the planar member; and

a non-planar member having an internal thread set adapted to engage the external thread set of the coupling member thereby connecting the non-planar member to the planar member, wherein portions of the pair of generally opposed surfaces of the planar member extend into the thread set of the non-planar member.

2. (canceled).

3. (currently amended) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the oblong slot is formed in a region adjacent an edge portion of the planar member.

4. (currently amended) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the planar member has more than one oblong slot aperture.

5. (canceled)

6. (currently amended) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the coupling member has a larger diameter dimension than a thickness dimension of the planar member, and the oblong slot has generally parallel sides extending between a pair of ends and a distance between the pair of ends of the oblong slot is substantially greater than the thickness dimension.

- 7 - 9 (canceled)

10. (currently amended) An apparatus for connecting two members together comprising:

a first member having a pair of generally opposed major surfaces and defining an engaging region, and a an oblong slot disposed at said engaging region;

25638216.1

BEST AVAILABLE COPY

an elongate threaded coupling member having an external thread set and an engaging portion for engaging the oblong slot of the first member, said threaded coupling member removably engaging the oblong slot; and

a second member having an internal thread set sized to cooperate with the external thread set of the threaded coupling member, wherein said external thread set of the threaded coupling member is threadedly received within the internal thread set, and wherein portions of the first member extend into the internal thread set of the second member.

11. (previously amended) An apparatus according to claim 10, wherein the elongate threaded coupling member is two longitudinal portions of a threaded shank each having an threaded exterior surface and a substantially flat interior surface.

12. (canceled)

13. (currently amended) An apparatus according to claim 10, wherein the thickness of the first member is less than a diameter of the internal thread set, and wherein the oblong slot has a pair of sides extending across a portion of the first member between a pair of ends and the first member thickness is substantially less than a distance between the pair of ends.

14. (currently amended) An apparatus for joining two members via a threaded coupling member, said apparatus comprising:

a first member having a an oblong slot aperture disposed proximate to an edge;

an elongate threaded coupling member having an external thread set and an engaging portion corresponding to the oblong slot aperture of the first member, said threaded coupling member removably engaging the oblong slot aperture and extending away from the edge of the first member; and

a second member having an internal thread set sized to cooperate with the external thread set of the threaded coupling member, said internal thread set operatively receiving a portion of both the external thread set of the threaded coupling member and a portion of the first member to securely bind the first member to the second member.

25638216.1

BEST AVAILABLE COPY

15 - 19 (canceled)

20 - 24. (withdrawn)

25. (previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 14, wherein the elongate threaded coupling member is two longitudinal portions of a threaded shank each having an threaded exterior surface and a substantially flat interior surface.

26. (currently amended) An apparatus according to claim 14, wherein the thickness of the first member is less than a diameter of the internal thread set, and a distance between ends of the oblong slot is substantially greater than the thickness of the first member.

25638216.1

-4-